Optional Practical Training (OPT) – Information Sheet

If you are approved for Optional Practical Training (OPT), or plan to participate in OPT in the future, you must know and follow these guidelines:

**After the OPT Application Process**

1. You may not begin employment until you receive the Employment Authorization Document (EAD Card) issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Upon receiving your EAD Card, you may NOT begin working until the start date on your card, and students must discontinue employment by the end date on the card.


3. You are allowed a total of 90 days of unemployment during your 12 month OPT. This includes weekends. You must keep close track of your days of unemployment. If you exceed your 90 days, you may be denied future immigration benefits. SEVP/ICE expects you to know the policies related to OPT.

4. Students must find employment in a field that is related to their degree of study.

5. Students need to work a minimum of 20 hours per week.

6. There are several “types” of jobs that constitute employment on OPT.
   
   a. Regular paid employment
   b. Multiple short-term employers
   c. Contractual work – perhaps you are an engineer working on a 3 month contract – then you move to another contract when the first is finished, etc.
   d. Self-employed business owner
   e. Employment through an Agency
   f. Volunteer or unpaid intern work –
      
      a. You MAY volunteer in an established program in your area of training (related to your current degree program).
7. Once you find employment or a volunteer position you must immediately notify your DSO regarding employment. Please provide the following information: Company name, company address, and job title with a short description of what work you will engage in. If you have changes in your personal address, telephone number, or if your visa status changes please contact the CIE Office. You should contact your DSO within 10 days of any change.

8. If you are working or volunteering at more than one location, you must submit the information above for each location.

9. When on OPT, it is RECOMMENDED that you carry insurance for the year. You may purchase insurance through LewerMark for the student price/fee. If you choose to purchase insurance through LewerMark, please contact your DSO for information on how to do this. This must be done before the first day of the quarter, and you will need to continue the coverage each quarter to remain eligible.

10. Travel on OPT - While on OPT you will need to carry the following documents for re-entry to the United States:
   - Valid Passport
   - Valid F-1 Visa [Students are eligible to apply for a new F-1 visa while on OPT]
   - I-20 [Travel signatures are valid for 6 months while on OPT]
   - Employment Authorization Document
   - Students are advised to carry a travel letter from their employer. The letter should be on company letter-head stationary and should include: name of supervisor and contact information, where you are traveling to, and when you are expected to return. Students are advised to carry a copy of the letter when applying for a visa renewal and for re-entry to the United States

After OPT

11. After the end date on your OPT Card occurs you will have an additional 60 day grace period to complete the transfer out process, complete the change of education level process, or prepare for departure from the United States.

12. If a student transfers out from South Seattle College to another SEVP-Approved school during the one year of OPT authorization this will cancel the student’s remaining eligibility to participate in OPT. The student will need to be approved by the new school for any additional employment.